Korea

This section is a combination of war diary, history and enemy force levels as reported to Headquarters 25th Infantry Division (G-2).

It all started June 25th, 1950 - *I, Robert G. Vallejos was stationed at this time, at Camp Chitose, Hokadio, Japan which is the northern most island owned by the Japanese. From Camp Chitose to the Korean port of Pusan is approx. 225 statute miles in a south westerly direction through the Sea of Japan. In June of 1950, Battery "B" of the 31st Field Artillery Battalion (FAB); a 155 Howitzer unit of the 7th Infantry Division; had been placed on high alert.*

SPC Vallejos began his assignment with the 31st FAB when he arrived in Korea, via the HMS Cayuga. He was reassigned several times as a liaison or in support of other units. Whoever held his main personnel file remains unknown.

Korea – North and South - (*For those of you not familiar with Korea, here is a description of its geography, people and politics.) Korea is separated from its northern neighbors, Manchuria and the Soviet Union, by the Yalu and Tumen Rivers. The Siberian port city of Vladivostock is only 80 miles northeast of the Korean border. Korea's strategically important position on the perimeter of the Asiatic landmass has been keenly sought by Chinese, Japanese and Russian statesmen.*

The country itself is a peninsula resembling a jagged club thrust south from Manchuria and the maritime province of the Soviet Union. 125 miles to the west, across the warm Yellow Sea, lies communist China's Shantung Peninsula. The Japanese Empire is about the same distance to the east, beyond the colder waters of the Sea of Japan.

Korea encompasses 85,270 sq. miles and is approx. ½ the size of California. It is a jumble of mountains, particularly in the north and along the east coast. Although close to the same latitude as San Francisco, Wichita and Philadelphia; Korean's climate is more extreme, especially during the bitterly cold winter months, which average around 50 to 80 degrees below zero.

Another feature of Korean weather is the monsoon, or rainy season. Lasting from the end of June through August, it turns the country's roads into muddy quagmires. In modern material possessions and comforts, Korea is a poor country. Most of its people work long, backbreaking hours in fields or rice paddies, earning a precarious living as farmers.

With a population over 28 million, less than one third live north of the 38th parallel. The southern portion of the peninsula is predominantly agricultural; the north is more industrial. South Koreans grow rice and barley, reaping harvests twice a year due to the rainy season. Crops in the north are of the dry-field type: wheat, millet corn and soybeans. Less rainfall north of the parallel limits the farmers there to one crop annually.

Natural resources such as minerals and waterpower are rather limited in the south but not altogether lacking. The north claims ample reserves of gold, iron, tungsten, copper and graphite; as well as highly developed hydroelectric facilities. Obviously, north and South Korea complement each other. To survive economically, the country best functions as a national unit.

For centuries Korean independence has been tempered by reliance upon the will of its stronger neighbors. Korea has long held definite attractions for the geo-politicians of China, Japan and Russia.

Following WW II, the Soviet Union undertook to implement the old Czarist dream of controlling China and its neighbors. Manchuria and that part of Korea north of the 38th parallel were occupied in 1945 by Russian troops. Communist control in northern Korean and Manchuria made available to the Soviet Union valuable warm-water harbors, which complement the ports of Siberia, that are largely icebound during the winter months.

From the communist point of view, the extension of Russian influence was ideal, since it facilitated the integration of Siberia's economy and transportation systems with those of the rest of eastern Asia. Only the southern part of Korea remained outside the sphere of communist influence. South Korea, itself a steppingstone to Japan, is that half of peninsula containing the capital of Seoul and many of the best ports. Acquisition of this portion of Korea was desirable to the forces of communism, in order to complete the control of Eastern Asia.

The majority of South Koreans favored an independent form of government. The government of the Republic of Korea was formed on 15 Aug 1948. It was also the day the US military influence below the 38th parallel came to an end. 50,000 American occupation troops were gradually withdrawn. The withdrawal was completed in June 1949. Only the Korean Military Advisory Group (KMAG), numbering approx. 500 American officers and enlisted men, remained to continue training Korean security forces.

After the summer of 1949, General MacArthur was no longer responsible for Korea's defense, nor did he retain command over the handful of American troops stationed in the republic. They were under the overall direction of the U.S. ambassador to Korea, John J. Muccio.

From its inception, the Republic of Korea was subjected to extreme provocation by the North Korean regime. Between 1949 and 1950 North Korea cooperated with communism's worldwide propaganda facilities, to begin a campaign of character assassination of President Rhee. The president was accused of the standard roster of crimes reserved for anti-communism politician that overly distressed the Kremlin.

President Rhee and members of his government were caricatured as being responsible, for the very economic ills with which North Korea officials were working to bring about. For example: although nearly 80% of the republic's electric power originated north of the parallel, the communists periodically cut off the flow of electricity into South Korea, then criticized the Seoul administration for failing to bring prosperity to the country.

This vicious propaganda campaign was pursued at a time when the economy of the republic was shaky at best. Loss of markets, military insecurity, lack of practical political experience and the effect of North Korean sabotage and propaganda crystallized the people's dissatisfaction with President Rhee's administration. When the second general elections for the National Assembly were held in May 1950, failure to resolve the pressing economic problems turned the tide of votes toward independent candidates and away from pro-administration office seekers.

The office of President was not affected by the voting, but when the new National Assembly convened on 19 June 1950, 130 of its 210 members were independents. Many of those independents were accused by the government of being communists. In the South Korean election of May 1950, even more people voted than in 1948, with an average of 10 candidates competing for each seat.

The smooth conduct of the elections; together with the significant gains made by moderate political elements; infuriated communist sympathizers within the republic. Communist agents fanned the flames of

resentment against President Rhee's administration, with the propaganda war from North Korea increasing in intensity. The years between 1945 and 1950, international communism was camouflaging its preparations for aggressive war by proclaiming its affection for peace.

The North Korean regime pursed an identical policy, conducting an undeclared war against the South Koreans. At a time when U.S. public opinion was forcing swift demobilization and sharp curtailment of military spending, and when South Korean troops were a lightly armed constabulary, the North Korean army was receiving a realistic course of battle indoctrination. North Korean military forces were strengthened by thousands of Korean soldiers who had fought in the Chinese communist armies against the nationalist government of Chang Kaishek.

The North Korean Army was supplied with Soviet artillery and tanks and was tutored by Soviet advisors and technicians. Selected North Korean officers attended schools for advanced training in the USSR. Relentless propaganda of daily radio broadcasts from North Korea accused the United States and South Korea of planning to attack the "peace-loving" population north of the 38th parallel.

Equally threatening to the security of South Korea was the activity of terrorists operating below the 38th parallel; their campaign of violence kept the people of the republic in a constant state of alarm.

Due to the heavy demand made upon the output of industry in the U.S., American military aid to the Republic of Korea under the Mutual Defense Assistance Program (MDAP) during the fiscal year 1950, was of little consequence. The South Korean forces needed great quantities of weapons to repel communist border raids and to suppress diversionist activities. On 25 June 1950, the North Korean Army launched a large-scale invasion of the Onjin peninsula, which is just south of the 38th parallel in western Korea; thus, beginning my involvement in the Korean Conflict.

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On the cusp of war, alone with his thoughts, was the second time Robert experienced the 'blue light'.

"…it appeared the day I found out I was gonna be in combat. I was layin in my bunk. On the ceiling was the same blue light. It wasn't attached to the ceiling, it was just there. It told me, in silence, like whispering…beware, you are to be in (grave danger), but you are strong…you are a believer."

Robert wasn't sure what to believe – but the fire in his gut would see him through this hell.